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Press Release

Germany bids farewell to 4th Brigade

By Karl Weisel
U.S. Army Garrison Hessen Public Affairs Office

Fliegerhorst--Soldiers, family members and civilians, including several area mayors, gathered on Erlensee's Fliegerhorst Kaserne to bid farewell to the 1st Armored Division's 4th Aviation Brigade June 7.

The brigade's last Soldiers are expected to depart Erlensee (located just outside Hanau) by July 15 with the brigade transitioning to Fort Riley, Kan., where it will re-flag as a Combat Aviation Brigade in August, according to Col. Robert Johnson, 4th Aviation Brigade commander.

"Over 50 years ago transformation and relocation brought U.S. Army Aviation from France to Fliegerhorst," said Johnson during the casing of the colors and community farewell ceremony. "Since 1952 the aviation units stationed at Fliegerhorst have developed in technology, aircraft and most importantly in the relationship with our NATO German partnerships and the local communities."

The commander described the various aircraft that have been stationed in Erlensee from H34 Choctaws to AH-64 Apaches, UH-1 Hueys to CH-47 Chinooks and the many missions Soldiers have accomplished successfully.

"The aviation missions from Fliegerhorst have been as diverse as the aircraft," Johnson said. "The aviators, crew chiefs and logisticians stationed here have consistently provided the highest mission support to our country to include supporting President John F. Kennedy's visit to Fliegerhorst Kaserne to the current President Bush's visit to Europe last year.

"Now that our brigade and battalion colors are cased, we are relocating to Fort Riley, Kan., and preparing to transform for a new era of global challenges," Johnson said. "On behalf of all Soldiers and families, past and present in the Hanau area I want to express my

sincere gratitude for your support, friendship and all of the fond memories."

Maj. Gen. Kenneth W. Hunzeker, 1st Infantry Division commander, also thanked local German and U.S. Army Garrison Hessen community members for their continuous support of the Army aviators and their families over the years. "We appreciate everything that you have done through the years to make our Soldiers feel at home here in Germany.

"The casing of these colors here today is a moment for nostalgia and reflection for many of us," said Hunzeker. "This marks the end of an era -- an era of the Iron Eagle colors flying proudly in Germany. This moment is also a moment for celebration -- the celebration of a job well done and the celebration of an opportunity to be part of the transformation of our entire service. These colors will unfurl once again in the United States and reorganize as a Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Riley, Kan. This aviation brigade has a bright future ahead of it and many of you will get a chance to continue to serve with the unit at Fort Riley. For the Soldiers who are moving on to other assignments -- the experience that you have gained as part of this world-class organization will make you a valuable asset to your new unit of assignment."

An exhibit detailing 70 years of Fliegerhorst Kaserne, including the many decades it was occupied by U.S. forces, is currently on exhibit in the Wasserburg in Erlensee. Visitors interested in taking a look at the history of the casern and airfield can call Werner Sönning at civilian (06183) 75871.

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